

The Far Side of Fear: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

OCD Definition (Secular):

The disturbing thoughts or images are called obsessions, and the rituals performed to try to prevent or get rid of them are called compulsions. There is no pleasure in carrying out the rituals you are drawn to, only temporary relief from the anxiety that grows when you don't perform them.

"I couldn't do anything without rituals. They invaded every aspect of my life. Counting really bogged me down. I would wash my hair three times as opposed to once because three was a good luck number and one wasn't. It took me longer to read because I'd count the lines in a paragraph. When I set my alarm at night, I had to set it to a number that wouldn't add up to a "bad" number."

"Getting dressed in the morning was tough because I had a routine, and if I didn't follow the routine, I'd get anxious and would have to get dressed again. I always worried that if I didn't do something, my parents were going to die. I'd have these terrible thoughts of harming my parents. That was completely irrational, but the thoughts triggered more anxiety and more senseless behavior. Because of the time I spent on rituals, I was unable to do a lot of things that were important to me."

"I knew the rituals didn't make sense, and I was deeply ashamed of them, but I couldn't seem to overcome them until I had therapy."

OCD Statistics

OCD afflicts about 3.3 million adult Americans. It strikes men and women in approximately equal numbers and usually first appears in childhood, adolescence, or early adulthood. One-third of adults with OCD report having experienced their first symptoms as children. The course of the disease is variable—symptoms may come and go, they may ease over time, or they can grow progressively worse.

OCD Treatment (Secular):

OCD generally responds well to treatment with medications or carefully targeted psychotherapy.

The six drugs that have been shown to be "effective" in treating OCD are: fluvoxamine (Luvox), fluoxetine (Prozac), sertraline (Zoloft), paroxetine (Paxil), citalopram (Celexa), and clomipramine (Anafranil).

A Biblical Perspective on OCD:

God created us with the ability to experience fear although sinful fear is a result of the Fall (Genesis 3).

God created us with the ability to form habits.

Our bodies cannot differentiate between true and false messages in the brain.

A Biblical Perspective on Counseling Those with OCD:

How Perfectionism Breeds OCD

Example: A student taking a test

A Biblical Perspective on Counseling Those with OCD:
How the desire for control breeds OCD

How the desire for control breeds Slavery and OCD

A Biblical Perspective on Counseling Those with OCD:
The treasure transfer (Matthew 6:19-21).

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19-21).

A Biblical Perspective on Counseling Those with OCD:
Freedom from enslaving fears.

"For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, {as to} what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and {yet} your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is {alive} today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, {will He} not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, "What will we eat?' or "What will we drink?' or "What will we wear for clothing?' "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:25-34).

A Biblical Prescription for Counseling Those with OCD:

How Christ's perfection frees us from self-perfecting rituals. :

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority" (Colossians 2:9-10);
"For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

How God's sovereignty frees us from self-protecting compulsions:

A Biblical Prescription for Counseling Those with OCD:

How treasuring the Lord brings peace to a burdened mind.

The steadfast of mind you will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in you (Isaiah 26:3).

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful (John 14:27).

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

How treasuring the Lord brings peace to a burdened mind

A Biblical Prescription for Counseling Those with OCD:

How saying “No”, if even for a moment will break the bands of bondage. *“I know that I feel like something terrible is going to happen if I don’t do this. But, even if I do it, I’ll still feel terrible and will only have to do it again. For right now, by the power of the Spirit and by faith, I’m going to put this off for 15 minutes. If I do this, the next time that I’m obsessed with this thought, it will be easier to say ‘No.’”*

A Biblical Prescription for Counseling Those with OCD:

Recognizing the enslaving propensity of all sin and patiently learning to put off and put on.

Discovering and addressing any chaotic patterns in the family.

OCD – The Far Side of Fear

| Worrisome Thought: I have to perform this ritual because: | Faithful Thought | Scriptural Truth | Focusing on the Kingdom and Righteous Living |
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| If I don't my husband might get fired. | God is able to provide for me through a rock or a raven. He knows what I need and He's promised to care for me. | Matthew 6:25f; Philippians 4:19; Psalm 23. | Pray for my husband; be thankful for what God's provided for me today. |
| If I don't I'll fail my test. | God is able to make me successful if that's what's best for me. He knows what I need and I can trust Him. | Psalm 75:6-7; Daniel 5:18 | Study a reasonable amount of time. Pray that God will help me. Get good rest before the test. |
| Something bad will happen and I won't be loved or accepted. | When I'm focused on being loved, I'm not focused on loving others. God knows what I need and He's promised that He'd never leave me nor forsake me. | Matthew 22:39; Philippians 2:3-11; Hebrews 13:5-6 | Look for opportunities to serve my friend and share her with others for their benefit. |
| I'll get germs and I'll become ill. | Every molecule in all creation is under God's sovereign rule. If God allows sickness into my life it will ultimately be for my good and His glory. He knows what I need. | Matthew 6:26; Daniel 4:35; Job 23:13; Psalm 115:3 | Try to be reasonably healthy and look for opportunities to serve the sick. |
| If I don't I might say something blasphemous or hurt someone. | God knows your heart! He didn't send His Son to die for perfect people, but rather for sinners who need His help. If you unwillingly think a wicked thought or say something that seems blasphemous, His forgiveness can reach even to you. Remember, He forgave people who crucified His Son. | Mark 2:17; Psalm 139:4; 1 John 1:9 | Rather than focusing on what I "might" say, I'll focus on what I "should" say. I will practice speech that is honoring and gentle. If I do say something unkind or even blasphemous, I'll ask God to forgive me and move on. |
| I'll do something embarrassing like passing out or vomiting in public. | If I am embarrassed because I'm seeking to obey God, I can rejoice that I'm being a fool for Him; being embarrassed because I'm obedient is better than being embarrassed because I'm being disobedient and faithless. God knows what I need. | 1 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 11:16; 2 Samuel 6:20-22; 1 John 4:18 | I must love God and others enough to risk being thought foolish. |